CLAIMS

1   1.   A method for identifying and verifying documents to determine if they are genuine,

2   counterfeit or altered, the method comprising the steps of:

3   determining a first characteristic of a first document to be verified, the first

4   characteristic being common to a first group of documents that is less than all documents;

5   retrieving a set of second characteristics for the first group of documents, where

6   individual documents in the first group of documents have ones of the second

7   characteristics;

8   comparing characteristics found in the first document with each of the second

9   characteristics to identify the first document;

10   retrieving a set of reference information unique to the first document; and

11   comparing characteristics found in the first document with each of the set of

12   reference information to determine if the first document is genuine, counterfeit or altered.

1   2.   The method in accordance with claim 1 further comprising the step of providing an

2   indication that the first document is genuine, counterfeit or altered based upon the results of

3   the reference information comparing step.

1   3.   The method in accordance with claim 1 wherein the first characteristic is the size of

2   the first document, all documents are divided into size ranges and the first group of

3   documents are those documents within one of the size ranges, and the second characteristics

4   are found at specific locations on individual documents of the first group of documents.

1   4.   The method in accordance with claim 3 wherein the second characteristics include

2   color patterns at specific locations on the documents.

1   5.   The method in accordance with claim 1 further comprising the steps of:

2   keeping track of each type of document identified in the first group of documents;

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3   selecting second characteristics for use in the second characteristic comparing step

4   starting with second characteristics for the most commonly identified type of document in

5   the first group of documents.

1   6.   Apparatus for identifying and verifying documents to determine if they are genuine,

2   counterfeit or altered, the method comprising the steps of:

3   means for determining a first characteristic of a first document to be verified, the first

4   characteristic being common to a first group of documents that is less than all documents;

5   means for retrieving a set of second characteristics for the first group of documents,

6   where individual documents in the first group of documents have ones of the second

7   characteristics;

8   means for comparing characteristics found in the first document with each of the

9   second characteristics to identify the first document;

10   means for retrieving a set of reference information unique to the first document; and

11   means for comparing characteristics found in the first document with each of the set

12   of reference information to determine if the first document is genuine, counterfeit or altered.

1   7.   The apparatus in accordance with claim 1 further comprising means for providing an

2   indication that the first document is genuine, counterfeit or altered based upon the results

3   from the reference information comparing means.

1   8.   The apparatus in accordance with claim 6 wherein the first characteristic is the size

2   of the first document, all documents are divided into size ranges and the first group of

3   documents are those documents within one of the size ranges, and the second characteristics

4   are found at specific locations on individual documents of the first group of documents.

1   9.   The apparatus in accordance with claim 8 wherein the second characteristics include

2   color patterns at specific locations on the documents.

1   10.   The apparatus in accordance with claim 6 further comprising:

2   means for keeping track of each type of document identified in the first group of

3   documents;

4   means for selecting second characteristics for use by the second characteristic

5   comparing means starting with second characteristics for the most commonly identified type

6   of document in the first group of documents.

1   11.   A method for identifying and verifying documents to determine if they are genuine,

2   counterfeit or altered, the method comprising the steps of:

3   determining the size of a first document to be verified, the size being common to a

4   first group of documents that is less than all documents;

5   retrieving a set of first characteristics for the first group of documents, where

6   individual documents in the first group of documents have ones of the first characteristics;

7   comparing characteristics found in the first document with each of the first

8   characteristics to identify the first document;

9   retrieving a set of reference information for the first document based upon the

10   identity of the first document; and

11   comparing characteristics found in the first document with each of the set of

12   reference information to determine if the first document is genuine, counterfeit or altered.

1   12.   The method in accordance with claim 11 further comprising the steps of:

2   keeping track of each type of document identified in the first group of documents;

3   and

4   selecting first characteristics for use in the first characteristic comparing step starting

5   with first characteristics for the most commonly identified type of document in the first

6   group of documents.

1   13.   The method in accordance with claim 12 further comprising the step of providing an

2   indication that the first document is genuine, counterfeit or altered based upon the results of

3   the third characteristics comparing step.

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14.   The method in accordance with claim 13 wherein the second characteristics include color patterns at specific locations on the documents.

15.   Apparatus for identifying and verifying documents to determine if they are genuine, counterfeit or altered, the apparatus comprising:
       means for determining the size of a first document to be verified, the size being common to a first group of documents that is less than all documents;
       means for retrieving a set of first characteristics for the first group of documents, where individual documents in the first group of documents have ones of the first characteristics;
       means for comparing characteristics found in the first document with each of the first characteristics to identify the first document;
       means for retrieving a set of reference information for the first document based upon the identity of the first document; and
       means for comparing characteristics found in the first document with each of the set of reference information to determine if the first document is genuine, counterfeit or altered.

16.   The apparatus in accordance with claim 15 further comprising:
       means for keeping track of each type of document identified in the first group of documents; and
       means for selecting first characteristics for use by the first characteristic comparing means starting with first characteristics for the most commonly identified type of document in the first group of documents;

17.   The apparatus in accordance with claim 16 further comprising means for providing an indication that the first document is genuine, counterfeit or altered based upon the results of the third characteristics comparing means.

18.   The apparatus in accordance with claim 17 wherein the second characteristics include color at specific locations on the documents.

19. A method for identifying and verifying documents to determine if they are genuine, counterfeit or altered, the method comprising the steps of:

determining a first characteristic of a first document to be verified, the first characteristic being common to a first group of documents that is less than all documents;

retrieving a set of second characteristics for the first group of documents, where individual documents in the first group of documents have ones of the second characteristics;

comparing characteristics found in the first document with each of the second characteristics to identify the first document;

keeping track of each type of document identified in the first group of documents;

selecting first characteristics for use in the first characteristic comparing step starting with first characteristics for the most commonly identified type of document in the first group of documents;

retrieving a set of reference information for the first document based upon the identity of the first document; and

comparing characteristics found in the first document with each of the reference information to determine if the first document is genuine, counterfeit or altered.

20. The method in accordance with claim 19 further comprising the step of providing an indication that the first document is genuine, counterfeit or altered based upon the results of the third characteristics comparing step.

21. The method in accordance with claim 20 wherein the first characteristics include color patterns at specific locations on the documents.

22. Apparatus for identifying and verifying documents to determine if they are genuine, counterfeit or altered, the apparatus comprising:

means for determining a first characteristic of a first document to be verified, the first characteristic being common to a first group of documents that is less than all documents;

5   means for retrieving a set of second characteristics for the first group of documents,

6   where individual documents in the first group of documents have ones of the second

7   characteristics;

8   means for comparing characteristics found in the first document with each of the

9   second characteristics to identify the first document;

10   means for keeping track of each type of document identified in the first group of

11   documents;

12   means for selecting second characteristics for use in the second characteristic

13   comparing step starting with second characteristics for the most commonly identified type of

14   document in the first group of documents;

15   means for retrieving a set of reference information for the first document based upon

16   the identity of the first document; and

17   means for comparing characteristics found in the first document with each of the set

18   of reference information to determine if the first document is genuine, counterfeit or altered.

1   23.   The apparatus in accordance with claim 22 further comprising means for providing

2   an indication that the first document is genuine, counterfeit or altered based upon the results

3   of the reference information comparing means.

1   24.   The apparatus in accordance with claim 23 wherein the first characteristics include

2   color at specific locations on the documents.

1   25.   A method for identifying and verifying documents to determine if they are genuine,

2   counterfeit or altered, the method comprising the steps of:

3   determining the size of a first document to be verified, the size being common to a

4   first group of documents that is less than all documents;

5   retrieving a set of first characteristics for the first group of documents, where

6   individual documents in the first group of documents have ones of the first characteristics;

7   comparing characteristics found in the first document with each of the first

8   characteristics to identify the first document;

9   keeping track of each type of document identified in the first group of documents;

10   selecting first characteristics for use in the first characteristic comparing step starting

11   with first characteristics for the most commonly identified type of document in the first

12   group of documents;

13   retrieving a set of reference information unique to the first document based upon the

14   identity of the first document; and

15   comparing characteristics found in the first document with each of the reference

16   information to determine if the first document is genuine, counterfeit or altered.

1   26.   The method in accordance with claim 25 further comprising the step of providing an

2   indication that the first document is genuine, counterfeit or altered based upon the results of

3   the reference information comparing means.

1   27.   The method in accordance with claim 26 wherein the first characteristics include

2   color at specific locations on the documents.

1   28.   Apparatus for identifying and verifying documents to determine if they are genuine,

2   counterfeit or altered, the apparatus comprising:

3   means for determining the size of a first document to be verified, the size being

4   common to a first group of documents that is less than all documents;

5   means for retrieving a set of first characteristics for the first group of documents,

6   where individual documents in the first group of documents have ones of the first

7   characteristics;

8   means for comparing characteristics found in the first document with each of the first

9   characteristics to identify the first document;

10   means for keeping track of each type of document identified in the first group of

11   documents;

12   means for selecting first characteristics for use by the first characteristic comparing

13   means starting with first characteristics for the most commonly identified type of document

14   in the first group of documents;

15   means for retrieving a set of reference information unique to the first document

16   based upon the identity of the first document; and

17   means for comparing characteristics found in the first document with each of the

18   reference information to determine if the first document is genuine, counterfeit or altered.

1   29.   The apparatus in accordance with claim 28 further comprising means for providing

2   an indication that the first document is genuine, counterfeit or altered based upon the results

3   of the reference information comparing means.

1   30.   The apparatus in accordance with claim 29 wherein the first characteristics include

2   color at specific locations on the documents.

1   31.   A computer readable medium containing executable instructions for identifying and

2   verifying documents to determine if they are genuine, counterfeit or altered, the executable

3   program instructions comprising program instructions for:

4   determining a first characteristic of a first document to be verified, the first

5   characteristic being common to a first group of documents that is less than all documents;

6   retrieving a set of second characteristics for the first group of documents, where

7   individual documents in the first group of documents have ones of the second

8   characteristics;

9   comparing characteristics found in the first document with each of the second

10 characteristics to identify the first document;

11   retrieving a set of reference information unique to the first document; and

12   comparing characteristics found in the first document with each of the reference

13 information to determine if the first document is genuine, counterfeit or altered.

1   32.   A computer readable medium containing executable instructions for identifying and

2   verifying documents to determine if they are genuine, counterfeit or altered, the executable

3   program instructions comprising program instructions for:

4   determining the size of a first document to be verified, the size being common to a

5   first group of documents that is less than all documents;

6   retrieving a set of first characteristics for the first group of documents, where

7   individual documents in the first group of documents have ones of the first characteristics;

8   comparing characteristics found in the first document with each of the first

9   characteristics to identify the first document;

10   keeping track of each type of document identified in the first group of documents;

11   selecting first characteristics for use in the first characteristic comparing step starting

12   with first characteristics for the most commonly identified type of document in the first

13   group of documents;

14   retrieving a set of reference information unique to the first document based upon the

15   identity of the first document; and

16   comparing characteristics found in the first document with each of the second

17   characteristics to determine if the first document is genuine, counterfeit or altered.

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